

in which R is an optionally substituted linear or branched C<sub>1-8</sub>-alkyl group or an aryl-C<sub>1-4</sub>-alkyl group, comprising oxidizing an alkoxypropionitrile of formula:



in which R has the meaning given above, using oxygen or an oxygen-forming reagent to give the cyanoacetic acid ester of formula I, in the presence of a catalyst based on lead or one of the transition metals.

8. The process according to Claim 7, wherein the transition metal catalyst is a cobalt catalyst.

9. The process according to Claim 8, wherein the cobalt catalyst is cobalt(II) acetate tetrahydrate.

10. The process according to Claim 9, wherein the cobalt(II) acetate tetrahydrate is employed in an amount from 0.01 to 10 mol percent relative to the alkoxypropionitrile of formula II.

11. The process according to Claim 10, wherein the oxidation is carried out at a temperature of 50 to 250 °C.

12. The process according to Claim 11, wherein the oxidation is carried out in an organic solvent.

13. The process according to Claim 7, wherein the cobalt catalyst is cobalt(II) acetate tetrahydrate.

14. The process according to Claim 7, wherein the transition metal catalyst is employed in an amount from 0.01 to 10 mol percent relative to the alkoxypropionitrile of formula II.

A1 15. The process according to Claim 7, wherein the oxidation is carried out at a temperature of 50 to 250 °C.

16. The process according to Claim 7, wherein the oxidation is carried out in an organic solvent.)

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IN THE ABSTRACT:

The Abstract is supplied on a separate page attached hereto.

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

In accordance with 37C.F.R. 1.121, please insert on page 1, between the Title and the first line, the priority benefit paragraph, and substitute for the original paragraph on page 2, lines 7 and 8, the following rewritten version of the paragraph on page 2, lines 7 and 8, as amended. The changes made are shown explicitly in the attached "Version With Markings to Show Changes Made".

Please insert on page 1, between the Title and the first line, the following priority benefit paragraph:

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A2 This is a 371 of International Patent Application PCT/EP00/08397, filed on August 29, 2000, that has priority benefit of Provisional Application No. 60/185,372, filed on February 28, 2000, and that has priority benefit of European Patent Application 99117033.3 filed on August 30, 1999.

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